

CHAPTER 23

Translators 1500s

“Tried in a furnace of earth”

Tyndale:

The First PRINTED English New Testament

Coverdale:

The First Complete PRINTED English Bible:

- ❖ Coverdale Bible
- ❖ The Great Bible

Rogers:

The Thomas Matthew’s Bible



The *S*tory of the **P**rinted English Bible

1525-1568

The English Bible was used widely in the 1400s and 1500s, in spite of the “furnace” which burned at the stake hundreds of English Christians and thousands upon thousands of Bibles (Ps. 12:6). Although the Bible had been available in *handwritten* form since the apostles, the first **PRINTED** Bibles became available in Italy, France, Germany and the Low Countries after 1455.

“[England] was nourishing her faith on manuscript copies of the Wiclifite versions long after the time when Bibles were printed in the vernacular of several European countries. **Germany** had a **PRINTED** translation of the Bible in 1465, **Italy** in 1471, **France** in 1474, the **Low Countries** in 1477, **Bohemia** in 1488, and printed versions of the Bible or parts were in circulation in several other languages and dialects long before any attempt had been made to print an English Bible” (Guppy, p. 2).

Martyr John Lambert, who was burned at the stake in 1538, said that English Christians needed, “as it is in **all** other countries,” a **PRINTED** Bible,

“...by them at all times, to pass the time godly, whensoever they have leisure thereto, like as they have in **France**...in **Flanders**...in Almain also, and **Italy**, and I suppose through **all the nations of Christendom**. Likewise **hath it been in England**, as you may find it in the English

story called ‘Polychronicon’...the **Saxon** tongue doth sound likewise after ours, and it is to ours partly agreeable...” (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 214, 213).

Coverdale had complained that “other nations should be more plenteously provided for with the [PRINTED] scriptures in their mother tongue than we in ours” (Dore, 2nd ed. p. 108).

“Between about 1520 and 1550, it (the Bible) entered the households of men and women at all levels of society...It was read fervidly and universally, and it became an intimate possession of daily lives. The importance of the Bible for the development of literacy and language in the sixteenth century can hardly be overstated” (Christopher DeHamel, *The Book. A History of the Bible*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2001, p. 216).

Translators who bravely followed the Bible, as it was “tried in a furnace of earth,” felt the purging and purification fires of persecution. When “tried in the fire,” they “come forth as gold.” As they abide near the cross, such men “hear my voice,” Jesus said, not “the voice of strangers” (Rev. 3:18, 20; Job 23:10; John 10:5).

William Tyndale

c. 1484-1536

William Tyndale gave his life a living sacrifice, and his “pen of a ready writer” for polishing, preserving, and publishing the English Bible (Ps. 45:1). Studies at Oxford, where he received his Bachelors and Masters degrees by 1515, led him to Cambridge, where he became actively involved in the Reformation. While in college, he “met with Erasmus” and began using his Greek

New Testament to polish the English Bible (J. Paterson Smyth, *How We Got Our Bible*, London: The Religious Tract Society, 1886, p. 83). Time tugged away, while working as a tutor in the early 1520s, unfolded as polished pages of the English New Testament. It shone with too much light for the ecclesiastical owls perched in positions of power. They rejected Tyndale's appeal for help, so he carried his precious cargo to the continent where he completed the New Testament in July of 1525. His printers in Cologne collapsed under the Catholic hammer of the Inquisition, so he fled again to Worms where the work was finished by late 1525. The name William Tyndale was not included.

Between 1525 and 1526 ships from cities producing Tyndale New Testaments were forbidden entry to English ports. God interceded miraculously to preserve his word. In the spring of 1527 rain pelted England, preventing the planting of crops. By fall, famished Britons sought the foodstuffs which flourished on the continent's Bible-loving lands. Hungry souls now welcomed ships laden with bread for the body and the forbidden "bread of life"—cleverly hidden copies of Tyndale's New Testament. This edition was "pouring into the country, capable of being produced at the rate of hundreds per day, and at a price within the reach of all." Foxe said,

"It was wonderful to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the learned sort, and those that were noted for lovers of the reformation, but generally **all England over** among all the vulgar common people" (J.R. Dore, *Old Bibles: An Account of the Early Versions of the English Bible*, 2nd edition, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1888, p. 15).

There was a "great demand for copies of the New Testaments" (J.R. Dore, *Old Bibles: An Account of the Various Versions*, 1st ed., London: Basil M. Pickering, 1876, p. 16). Since

they could not be printed in England, a printer in Antwerp supplied the need. Over “15,000 of his first New Testament were issued within four years” (Smyth, p. 88, n. 2). One 1526 edition was “a little pocket size book...easy to conceal” (De Hamel, p. 242). By 1530 there were “fifty-thousand copies about in the land.” The English Bible “reached everyone who could read,” which included most Christian people (Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2001, pp. 142, 84). McGrath confirms that,

“In 1527, John Rastell, one of Henry VIII’s advisors, noted that **‘the universal people** of this realm had great pleasure and gave themselves greatly to the **reading** of the vulgar English tongue” (Alister E. McGrath, *In the Beginning*, New York: Doubleday, 2001, p. 34).

The cost of a New Testament, whether handwritten or printed, has always been within the reach of English Christians. An entire handwritten Bible in 1420 was “four marks and forty pence,” which was “not an impossible sum to achieve if a group of Lollards bought a copy between them.” With the invention of printing, a Tyndale New Testament could be purchased for 7 groats, which was “easily affordable for even a labouring man.” “[F]olks were often charged simply what they could afford, and it was not at all uncommon for the sellers to give them away if the recipient was too poor to buy a copy” (McGrath, p. 34, pp. xv, xvi). Tyndale added a prologue and notes to his 1534 edition. Henry VIII’s wife, Anne Boleyn, treasured her copy of this edition and followed it, along with Tyndale, to receive a martyr’s crown. While imprisoned, Tyndale polished the New Testament further and a 1535 edition was printed.

**A DOCUMENTED HISTORY
COMPARING
PURE BIBLES
FROM**

gOTHIC

Tyndale

Bishops'

KING JAMES

BIBLE

**SHOWING WORDS
OMITTED IN
MODERN VERSIONS**

The Cambridge History of the Bible describes the Tyndale text as “modern...too colloquial...[using] an unnecessary number of words.” “[T]he Authorized Version [is] more majestic,” it contends (vol. 2, pp. 144-145).

“[T]he voice of the LORD is **full** of majesty” (Ps. 29:4).

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* states that Tyndale used “simple and popular language” (EB, s.v. Bible, English, p. 899). Tyndale anticipated the need for the ‘elevated’ and fuller vocabulary of our KJV. Of his own edition he said,

“...[C]ount it as a thing not having his **full** shape...a thing begun rather than finished... In time to come...we will give it his **full** shape...to seek in certain places a more proper English” (Dore, 2nd ed., pp. 23-24).

Yale University Press author, David Daniell, comments on Tyndale’s “simplicity,” comparing his “**old** things are **gone**” to the KJV’s metrical “the **former** things are **passed away**” (Rev. 21:4). Christians recognize why “sacred Scripture should always be elevated above the common run.” Consequently, “It is also characteristic of the Authorized Version to elevate ‘**went** into the ark’ to ‘**entered** into,’ ‘prayed’ to ‘besought,’ and ‘edge’ to ‘border’ (David Daniell, transl., *Tyndale’s New Testament*, New Haven: Yale University Press. 1989, pp. xxvi, xxvii, xxviii).

In Mark 6:11 Tyndale used the *easier* word “easier,” which the KJV wisely translated as “more tolerable.” The connotation of the word ‘easy’ may not describe the “judgment” coming for new version editors, who follow their own ‘judgment’ and omit God’s “judgment” entirely.

“... *Verily* I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.” Mark 6:11b

Gothic
pre-A.D. 350

Amen qīpa īzwis, sutizo īst
Sauda**u**myam aī**p**pau
Gau**m**auryam īn **d**aga stauos,
pau **p**izai baurg yainai.

Tyndale

1526-1534

I saye verily vnto you, itt shalbe
easier for Zodom and Gomor att
the daye off iudgement, than for
that cite.

Bishop
1568

I say veryly vnto you, it shalbe
easier for the Sodomites and the
Gomorrheans in the day of
iudgement, then for that citie

KJV

Verily I say unto you, It shall be
more tolerable for Sodom and
Gomorrha in the day of
judgment, than for that city.

NIV, TNIV
and NASB

OMIT

NKJV note

OMIT

Jehovah
Witness
Version

OMIT

Catholic
Version

OMIT

See errors in HCSB, ESV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, NCV, etc.

yndale wrote of his polished new 1534 edition,

“The Newe Testament, dylygently **corrected** and compared with the Greke by Willyam Tindale.”

“I have looked over **agayne** (now at the last), with all dylygence, and compared it vnto the Greke, and weded oute of it many **fautes**, which lacke of helpe at the begynninge and **oversight** dyd sowe therein” (Bosworth, p. xxvii).

His 1534 corrections are a move toward the KJV. (Unfortunately, Tyndale’s 1526 edition has been widely displayed, reprinted and quoted, with a few seeming differences from the KJV. Many of these differences were corrected in Tyndale’s 1534 edition, which has not currently been so widely reprinted.)

The following charts show that “the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:23) keeps on course from Acts 2 to you — crashing only as corrupt versions unite in error.

(The following pages also show the ‘J’ fonts used in a 1525 edition of Tyndale’s New Testament and a 1535 edition of Coverdale’s New Testament. Their similarity to today’s ‘J’ proves wrong the bizarre fable spun on the web that ‘the letter *J* was not *pronounced* as it is today until recently and consequently ‘Jesus’ is not the name of our Saviour, but a spin off of Isis or Zeus.’ Delilah had a similar conversation with Samson: “...[T]ell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her...with the web” Judges 16:13).

“*And* immediately he received his sight, and followed **Jesus** in the way.” Mark 10:52

Gothic
pre-A.D. 350

īesu

Tyndale
1526-1534

Jesus

Bishops' 1568	iesus
KJV	Jesus
NASB	OMIT
Jehovah Witness Version	OMIT
Catholic Version	OMIT
See <i>errors</i> in HCSB, ESV, NRSV, RSV, etc.	

UThe. iiij. Chapter.

As sone as the lorde had knoweledge howe
 that it was come to the eares off the pha-
 rises that **J**esus made and baptised moo disci-
 ples then **J**hon (thought that **J**esus hym silfe
 baptised **n**ot: butt his disciples) he lefte ieruz-
 and departed agayne into galile. And it was
 soo that he must nedes goo thozowe Samaria.
 The cam he to a cite of Samaria called **S**char
 & iiij

(Tyndale, 1862 facsimile of 1525 edition, John 4, from *The Book of a Thousand Tongues*, Eric M. North, Editor, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938, p. 113.)

“... and from our Lord Jesus Christ,” Gal. 1:3	
Gothic pre-A.D. 350	frau jins unsar amma Lord our

Tyndale
1526-1534

our Lord

Bishops' 1568	our Lorde
KJV	our Lord
NIV, TNIV, NASB	the Lord
Jehovah Witness Version	the Lord
Catholic Version	the Lord
See <i>errors</i> in ESV, NLT, NRSV, NCV, etc.	

The III. Chapter.

Wow rhan Jesus had knowlege, & it was cometo the eares of the pharises, that Jesus made and baptised mo disciples thē Jhon (howbeit Jesus himself baptyfed not, but his disciples) * he left the londe of Jewry, and departed agayne in to Galile. But he must nedes go thorow Samaria. Then came he in to a cite of Sama-

Coverdale Bible, 1535, *The Book of a Thousand Tongues*, Eric M. North, Editor, 1938, New York: Harper & Brothers, p. 115.

One of the world’s oldest papyri fragments, P66, dated about A.D. 180, records the words “Holy Ghost” in John 7:39. This papyri also shows a note above the word “Holy,” indicating that some sinister scribe wanted the word “Holy” removed. New versions harp on the same sinister string today. Paul warned of such scribes when he said, “We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God...” (2 Cor. 2:17). God preserved the true reading for us today in the KJV.

<p>“...the <i>Holy</i> Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” John 7:39</p>	
<p>Gothic pre-A.D. 350</p>	<p>Ahmasa Weiha Ghost Holy</p>

Tyndale
1526-1534

Holy Gost

<p>Bishops’ 1568</p>	<p>holy ghost</p>
<p>KJV</p>	<p>Holy Ghost</p>
<p>NIV, TNIV, NASB etc.</p>	<p>_____ Spirit</p>
<p>NKJV note</p>	<p>_____ Spirit</p>
<p>Jehovah Witness Version</p>	<p>_____ Spirit</p>
<p>Catholic Version</p>	<p>_____ Spirit</p>
<p>See <i>errors</i> in HCSB, ESV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, NCV, etc.</p>	

The Living God

Martyrs died for the “living God,” spoken of in John 6:69 in the Tyndale and KJV Bibles. Their blood cries from the ground and vies for the authenticity of these words, while new version editors are dying to get rid of them. Martyr John Rogers wrote before his death:

“Seek first, I say, **the living God**, and always him adore,
And then be sure that he will bless your basket and your store”
(Matt Whitling, *The Grammar of Poetry*, Moscow, Idaho, 2000, p. 6).

In 1557 Richard Woodman, an iron-maker from Chishester, was questioned before a tribunal and finally burned at the stake with ten others in Lewes. The devil’s charge was — ‘A better translation would be.’ Woodman died defending the Bible’s method of expounding words, saying, “[O]ne scripture must be understood by another.” The age-old battle for the Bible is summarized here by Foxe:

Inquisitor: “...[I]t is **wrong translated**, as it is in a thousand places more...”

Woodman: “If that place be wrong translated, and so many places of the Bible as you say, then I may say with Christ, It cannot be avoided, but offences must be given; but woe unto them by whom they come. I may say, Woe unto **false translators**: for cursed are they that add or take away. But take you heed that you belie not the translators. I believe they had the fear of God more before their eyes than you report of them...”

Inquisitor: “O, my lord, what a heretic...! Send him to prison...Me thinks he is not afraid of the prison...”

Woodman: “No, I praise **the living God**.”

Inquisitor: “This is a heretic indeed! He hath the right terms of all heretics; ‘the living God:’”

Woodman: “Be you angry with me, because I speak the words which are written in the Bible?”

Inquisitor: “**Bible-babble, bible-babble!** What speakest thou of the Bible?...My lord, I will tell you how you shall know a heretic by his words...[T]hey will say, ‘the Lord,’ and ‘we praise God’ and ‘the living God:’ by these words you shall know a heretic.”

Woodman: “All these words are written for our learning...I marvel why you should reprove me there-for, seeing they be the words of God...I believe in the living God... And the greatest cause that I was compelled to read the Scriptures, was, because the preachers and teachers were so changeable...I believe, he that would burn a Testament willingly, would burn God himself, if he were here, if he could: for he and his word are all one...”

Inquisitor: “Who shall be judge betwixt us in this matter?”

Woodman: “The twelfth of John declareth who shall be judge in the last day.”

Inquisitor: “You mean **the word shall judge the word.** How can that be?”

Woodman: “Peter saith, ‘The scripture hath no private interpretation:’ but **one scripture must be understood by another.**”

Foxe ends saying, “And thus have you the examinations of this blessed Woodman, or rather *Goodman* [and]...the gross ignorance and barbarous cruelty of his adversaries, especially Dr. White...” (Foxe, vol. 8, pp. 340-374). *Déjà vu.*

The Great Bible of 1539 warns on its frontispiece, “I make a decree that in all my kingdom men shall tremble and fear before **the living God**” (Smyth, *How We Got Our Bible*, p. 104).

<p>“<i>And</i> we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John 6:69</p>	
<p>Gothic pre-A.D. 350</p>	<p>Christus, sunus Gups libandins Christ, the Son of God living</p>

Tyndale
1526-1534

**Christ, the sonne off the lyvyng
God**

<p>Geneva 1560-1599</p>	<p>Christ, that Sonne of the liuing God</p>
<p>Bishops’ 1568</p>	<p>Christe, the sonne of ye lyuyng God</p>
<p>KJV</p>	<p>Christ, the Son of the living God</p>
<p>NIV, TNIV, NASB etc.</p>	<p>the Holy One of _____ God</p>
<p>NKJV note</p>	<p>the Holy One of _____ God</p>
<p>Jehovah Witness Version</p>	<p>the Holy One of _____ God</p>
<p>Catholic Version</p>	<p>God’s holy one</p>
<p>See errors in HCSB, ESV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, NCV, etc.</p>	

Martyrs, like Woodman, who obeyed Christ’s command, to “follow me,” took up their cross and went to the stake. Once again new versions cleave together like burrs. Their editors are more busy than well occupied.

<p>“...and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” Mark 10:21</p>	
<p>Gothic pre-A.D. 350</p>	<p>nimands galgan take cross</p>

Tyndale
1526-1534*

take vp thy cross

<p>Bishops’ 1568</p>	<p>take vp the crosse</p>
<p>KJV</p>	<p>take up the cross</p>
<p>NIV, TNIV, NASB</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>Jehovah Witness Version</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>Catholic Version</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>HCSB</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>NLT</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>NRSV, RSV</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>ESV</p>	<p>OMIT</p>

Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works...” (Matt. 5:16). Men cannot help but see if we allow Christ’s “righteousness” (Phil. 3:9) to shine forth from vessels broken and usable for ‘righteous’ or ‘charitable deeds.’ However, the giving of money or things (alms) can and should be done “in secret” (Matt. 6:1-4). ‘Alms’ is defined in the KJV as “give... such things as ye have” (Luke 11:41). The KJV, as it so often does, re-sounds the consonants of the Greek language (alms = *eleemosune*). The “give” is seen in the ‘L’ which, as its form suggests, means ‘extending.’ The “things” are seen in the ‘m.’ The letter ‘M’ signals matter, like mammon, money, mud, mountains, etc. Alms is therefore ‘**extending** (l) **matter** (m) to those in need.’ The word ‘alms’ is defined again in Acts 3:5, 6 as “something” and “such as I have.” This definition is repeated in Luke 12:33 as “that ye have.” New versions teach the opposite, saying that Christians should “not” let men see their “righteousness.”

<p>“<i>Take</i> heed that ye do not your alms before men...” Matthew 6:1</p>	
<p>Gothic pre-A.D. 350</p>	<p>tauyan alms (See Balg, p. 428)</p>

Tyndale 1526-1534 **almes**

Bishops’ 1568	almes
KJV	alms
NIV, TNIV, NASB & JW	righteousness
Catholic Version	righteous deeds
NKJV	charitable deeds
<p>See <i>errors</i> in HCSB, ESV, NRSV, RSV, etc.</p>	

New versions have graven an image of a careless and comfortless God who unknowingly lets his people starve to death and does not give “his beloved sleep” (Ps. 127:2). In the *New Century Version*, “we get no sleep or food.” The KJV speaks to Christians who are *so* beloved that they freely fast and willingly watch in prayer for others.

“*But* in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, **in watchings, in fastings;**” 2 Cor. 6:4-5

Gothic
pre-A.D. 350

in wokainim, in lausqibrrein
in watching, in fastings

Tyndale
1526-1534*

in watchinge, in fastyng

Bishops' 1568	in watchynges, in fastinges
KJV	in watchings, in fastings
NIV, TNIV, NASB	sleepless nights and hunger
J.W. Version	sleepless nights, by times without food
Catholic Version	sleepless, starving
See <i>errors</i> in HCSB, ESV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, NCV, etc.	

*N*IVs and TNIVs start stuttering and repeating when the *real* word ‘hunger’ is revealed near the word ‘fasting.’

<p>“... in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often...” 2 Cor. 11:27</p>	
<p>Gothic pre-A.D. 350</p>	<p>kainim ufta (in watchings), in gredau (in hunger) jah (and) paurstein*, in lausqipreim afta (in fasting often),</p>

Tyndale
1526-1534*

watchings often, in **hunger**, in thirst, in **fastings** often,

<p>Bishops’ 1568</p>	<p>in watchinges often, in hunger and thirst, in fastinges often,</p>
<p>KJV</p>	<p>... in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often,...</p>
<p>NIV, TNIV, NASB etc.</p>	<p>gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food;</p>
<p>Jehovah Witness Version</p>	<p>in sleepless nights often, in hunger and thirst, in abstinence from food</p>
<p>Catholic Version</p>	<p>nights without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty, and often altogether without food</p>
<p>See <i>errors</i> in HCSB, ESV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, NCV, etc.</p>	

***p** sounded like ‘th,’ so the word was pronounced ‘thirstin.’

<p>“...give yourselves to fasting and prayer...” 1 Cor. 7:5</p>	
<p>Gothic pre-A.D. 350</p>	<p>fastan jah bidjan fasting and prayer</p>

Tyndale
1526-1534*

fasting and prayer

<p>Bishops' 1568</p>	<p>fasting and prayer</p>
<p>KJV</p>	<p>fasting and prayer</p>
<p>NIV, TNIV, NASB</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>
<p>Jehovah Witness Version</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>
<p>Catholic Version</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>
<p>HCSB</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>
<p>NLT</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>
<p>NRSV RSV</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>
<p>NCV</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>
<p>ESV</p>	<p>_____ prayer</p>

The critic’s claws receive the Bible as fine marble and leave it as rough brick, destroying the “power, and the glory” of the word of God.

<p>“<i>For</i> thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” Matt. 6:13b</p>	
<p>Gothic pre-A.D. 350</p>	<p>Unte (For) peina (thine) ist (is) piudangardi (the kingdom), yah (and) mahts (the power), yah (and) wulpus (the glory) in (for) aiwins (ever). Amen.</p>

Tyndale
1530-1534*

For thine is ye* kyngedome, and ye* power, and ye* glorie, for ever. Amen. (1534)

<p>Bishops' 1568</p>	<p>For thine is the kyngdome, and the power, and the glory, for euer. Amen.</p>
<p>KJV</p>	<p>For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.</p>
<p>NIV, TNIV</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>NKJV note</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>J. W. Version Catholic Version</p>	<p>OMIT</p>
<p>See <i>errors</i> in ESV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, NCV, etc.</p>	

* The word ‘ye’ here was pronounced ‘the.’ The Gothic font ‘þ’, called the ‘thorn,’ represented the ‘t’ and ‘th’ sound; it was later modified and looked much like a ‘y’ (i.e. *De Olde Shoppe*). Consequently, it is mis-read and mis-transcribed as ‘ye.’